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UNCLAS KATHMANDU 000551

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/INS AND DS/IP/SA
LONDON FOR POL - GURNEY

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TFI201: NEPAL REACTIONS TO WAR IN IRAQ FOR MARCH
27

REF: KATHMANDU 0545

1. PROTESTS AND MISSION SECURITY: The Embassy maintained full services and normal working hours on March 27. As of 3:00 p.m. local time, Embassy knows of no protests in the capital against the war in Iraq or against the U.S. A small anti-war protest in downtown Kathmandu on March 26 apparently fizzled out because of inclement weather conditions and did not reach the Embassy. The Nepali-language press reported on March 27 that a student group in midwestern Pyuthan District (approximately 300 km from Kathmandu) had held a protest rally on March 26. According to reports, the students burned an effigy of President Bush and chanted anti-American slogans.

2. MEDIA OPINION: Major newspapers carried wire service reports of the fighting in Iraq, with the 14 casualties in a Baghdad marketplace claiming most headlines. For the second consecutive day, pro-Indian daily "The Himalayan" carried anti-war editorials republished from the "The Guardian" in London. "The Kathmandu Post," the leading English daily, printed a local editorial entitled "Economic Implications of War," which predicted a downturn in tourism, posited (without any supporting evidence) that "the export sector has been badly affected," and (spuriously) linked the Gulf conflict to hikes in local petroleum prices.

3. PRO-US SUPPORT: On March 27 the Ambassador received a letter from a local Nepali businessman expressing "special thanks to the US Government for taking a hard step against Iraq to make stability and peace in the Middle East and all over the world."

MALINOWSKI